

The Leesburg Tree Commission met in regular session on Monday, November 20, 2000 at 7:30 p.m. in the lower level meeting room, 25 West Market Street, Leesburg, Virginia. Members present were: Mr. John Groothius, Ms. Anne Wall, Mr. Jim Hicks, Mr. R. Max Peterson, Ms. Kathleen Pritchard, Mr. William Wolf and Mr. Bob Zoldos.

### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the October 16, 2000 meeting were approved as written.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Leesburg tree stewards, Debbie Axford and Barbara Lupfer gave the Tree Commission a briefing on the tree steward program and how they may be able to fit in and develop a program for Leesburg. Ms. Axford completed the tree steward program and Ms. Lupfer is a certified arborist. Both are Master Gardeners. They said they want to start small and work in concert with what already is in place. They want to learn what the Tree Commission has already done and the direction the Tree Commission wants to go. They also want to contact groups already in place. Their goal is to help the town with its' needs and act as liaison with the public and do some education. As an example of the types of assistance they could provide, Ms. Axford referred to the program in Front Royal. In Front Royal, the tree stewards have started to inventory the trees; they do a lot of tree trimming; go into schools to educate children; and participate in the Arbor Day and the Leaf Festival in the Fall. This year they planted a millennium tree. They also educate people about appropriate tree choices such as the types of trees to plant below a power line. Front Royal's long term goal is to create a native tree arboretum. They also pointed out that Front Royal was able to receive grants to support their programs based on volunteer hours from the tree stewards. In this regard, the Virginia Urban Forest Council has a number of grants that are available to towns.

Per Ms. Lupfer, it was suggested by Mr. Banks that the tree stewards start slow and do small things well. One of the first things they looked at with Mr. Banks was their first exposure at the Spring Flower and Garden Show. They will share the booth with the Tree Commission. This will serve several purposes. Not only will it validate the tree stewards and give them exposure, it will also provide volunteer assistance to man the booth. To further increase exposure, the tree stewards plan to talk to related groups. They already have an opportunity to do something within the library system.

Mr. Banks said he foresaw a big component of their activities as education in such venues as home owners associations. The tree stewards said they want to take a two-fold approach to education. They want to educate the home owner and home owner association as far as what to expect from a landscaper and they also want to educate the landscaper.

The tree stewards commented it might be beneficial to have tours of historic trees. Surprisingly, some children have never seen a mature tree. This may empower people to recommend trees from a historical point of view.

Ms. Wall invited the tree stewards to participate in the Arbor Day meetings.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Ms. Wall commented that all the trees have been planted for the Eastern Gateway. Mr. Peterson said the Tree Commission should take on the responsibility of ensuring their survival since it is our front yard.

Ms. Pritchard commented that the Tree Commission should consider participating earlier in the Ida Lee Park plan rather than waiting until a decision has been made. Mr. Groothius commented the plan is not just for Ida Lee Park, it is the master plan for all parks. It deals with land acquisition. The Tree Commission does not need to comment until the preliminary plan is received because nothing will be solid up to that point.

Mr. Zoldos said that in regards to working with Parks & Rec, there should be a joint meeting to discuss the Rt. 621 park that is next to Simpson Middle School. It was suggested that Kaj Dentler, Director of Parks and Recreation, come to the next meeting to provide an overview of what the plans are. The Tree Commission would also like to see the detailed drawings. Further, when Mr. Dentler talks to the Tree Commission about Rt. 621 he can also brief the group about the master plan. Mr. Banks will see if Mr. Dentler is available for the December meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The Tree Commission received the application for a booth at the Flower and Garden Show. The Flower and Garden Show will be held April 21-22. The deadline for reserving a space is February 12, 2001. A motion was made and seconded to return the application for processing.

Ms. Wall reported that the Arbor Day celebration will be held on April 28, 2000. Ida Lee Park and Banshee Reeks are being considered as possible locations for the festivities. The Arbor Day Committee wants the Tree Commission to participate in some form. The next Arbor Day meeting will be in January.

**COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

Ms. Pritchard commented that she was very impressed with the tree stewards and feels they can be very helpful when it comes to education. She hoped the Tree Commission gave them the impression that they were really interested in helping them. She wished they were not waiting until the Flower and Garden Show to jump into doing something. She thought that the Tree Commission would discuss specifics tonight to help them or

give them some direction and we did not. It was suggested as an agenda item for the December meeting.

Mr. Peterson asked if the Tree Commission knew the names of all the home owner associations. This might be good not only for the Tree Commission but also the tree stewards because they may be able to recruit volunteers from this venue. A partial list had earlier been distributed from the Public Information Office. Mr. Zoldos commented that Phil Rodenberg, the Deputy Town Manager, might have an updated list.

Ms. Wall asked to discuss a plan for spending the Tree Commission's tree money. Mr. Hicks suggested the Commission finish what was started - the Gateway. Mr. Banks commented that over 120 trees were planted in town this year, including the Gateway. Eighty-eight of those were in Ida Lee. Mr. Banks pointed out that planting the trees is the easy part, maintenance, however is problematic because there aren't enough people. He said the Commission was getting way ahead in planting trees and not having the ability to follow-up and maintain the trees on the bypass. We don't have a good handle on taking on a large group of trees.

Ms. Pritchard commented that it appeared that the Tree Commission needs to go to the town administration and ask for a budget to maintain the trees. Mr. Banks said that issue is being looked at and that there is a study coming out on it.

Mr. Zoldos asked whether Mr. Tompkins was aware of the need for personnel and for maintenance of the trees. Mr. Banks said he wouldn't have that under his purview. The active components in town doing tree maintenance are Public Works and Parks and Rec. It was asked if either of those departments planned on asking for additional personnel at the mid-year review. Mr. Bank's did not know the specifics of what they were addressing. He thought they had them in the budget. Mr. Zoldos wanted to be sure that Mr. Banks' department was sharing this shortcoming with the other departments who had the maintenance responsibility and that they put that in the mid-year budget. A discussion continued on this and a motion was made and seconded for the Chairman to sign off on a memo to the Town Manager with a drop copy to the Mayor that recommends that the maintenance of landscaping and trees be addressed in a budgetary manner during the mid-year review.

Mr. Banks commented that Mr. Freda and Mr. Russell, with the town, were tasked with doing a study on the maintenance issue. Mr. Banks met personally with them to discuss tree maintenance. They sat down with Public Works, Parks and Rec, the Airport, Utilities and the Police Department. All these departments are involved in maintenance. It was noted that the town needed a comprehensive approach that looked at things from a unified perspective rather than having six different departments taking care of the trees or grass. Mr. Hicks asked if there was any way the town arborist could be utilized to coordinate this - bearing in mind they are not his departments and he doesn't have direct control over resources. Mr. Banks said there is a recommendation that will be filtering down as part of this study. Mr. Banks isn't sure what department he will end up in. Mr. Peterson pointed out that the departments may not want to relinquish control of what is

going on in their areas. One way to handle this is to have some form of oversight responsibility, some kind of unified budget without a consolidation of resources/manpower.

It was decided that before the Tree Commission could make a decision on how to spend the tree planting money, they needed to become familiar with projected road plans so that trees aren't planted and then uprooted years later because of road expansion. In addition, the Tree Commission believed it would be beneficial for the town engineers, either Paul Gauthier or Tom Mason to speak to the Tree Commission about proposed future development. The Tree Commission asked to have this information by the January meeting. It was also asked to get for the next meeting information on the town's plans for development for Catoctin Circle. Mr. Banks said he would have a map of Catoctin Circle and Edwards Ferry Road.

Mr. Banks said he was in Charlottesville for the Urban and Community Forest Strategic Plan Workshop for the state of Virginia. Their five-year strategic plan was discussed.

A motion was made and seconded to order River Birch trees from the seedling catalogue. The price this year is \$225.00 per thousand.

Mr. Banks passed out new brochures for the Commission to look at. He commented that these brochures were more expensive.

Mr. Banks brought a section of a sweet gum tree to the meeting. This tree had been planted in the park ten years ago. He did this to illustrate tree girdling roots and to give an indication of some of the problems Leesburg's urban forest encounters and what the tree steward program could possibly address. He pointed out that removal of sick trees is costly. If you consider the initial tree cost, maintenance, removal and purchase of a replacement tree and installation, total costs can range over \$700.00 per tree.

Mr. Hicks asked if the Tree Commission should consider purchasing an air spade as part of their budget for next year? Mr. Banks didn't think that would be an appropriate place for it but it has been discussed with other departments doing maintenance.

There being no further business, the Tree Commission adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

---

Jay Banks, Town Arborist

---

Kathy Kidwell, Recording Secretary